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ABSTRACT

In the hope of extending school learning experiences into the home environment, this paper proposes that parents and teachers should combine their efforts to develop home learning kits. It was suggested that personal identity, community identity, cooperative living, and survival skills kits might all be worthwhile and necessary means by which to achieve learning goals. To develop any effective home learning program, however, the kits must be related to what is happening in the classrooms. (CS)

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IDEAS FOR PARENT-TEACHER MADE HOME LEARNING KITS

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A persistent problem confronting parents and teachers revolves around extending school learning experiences into the home learning environment. Indeed the kinds of behaviors modeled for the child at home have much to do with how he behaves and reacts to the classroom learning experience. In the same respects teachers have a responsibility to help parents develop a meaningful setting at home for extending and enriching the school learning experience. The learning process in which the child is involved must be cooperatively arranged and developed by parents, teachers, and children if the child is to find continuity and harmony in his quest for finding sustenance in approaching life.

In conjunction with this perspective on continuous home-school learning the partners (parents and teachers) should discuss and mutually agree on some basic educational goals. These goals should reflect the concerns of the children and whenever possible be developed in consultation with the children. What are some basic learning goals in which parents, teachers, and children can find agreement? It would seem that all partners could agree that personal identity, community identity, cooperative living, and survival skills are worthwhile and necessary learning goals.

The classroom teacher can develop self identity activities in the classroom and encourage the positive self growth of the child; yet she needs her partner to really make it work. Thus parents and teachers could get together and develop homelearning kits for continuing the self development of the child which was initiated in the classroom. The following are ideas for a self concept homelearning kit.

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KIT ONE: Self Concept Builders. Parents and teachers of preschool, kindergarten, and primary grade children all are concerned with the healthy development of the child. Self identity activities are a good place to initiate such development. Parent-Teacher Group Sessions may well be used to start this kit. The kit could take on various forms but should include activities such as; (1) continuance of school initiated self concept activities into the home. Hanging art work of children on the refrigerator, utilization of class pictures in the child's bedroom, sharing a 'me book' at home with all of the family, and listening to tape recorded dream stories of the children are just some ideas for self concept kits. (2) expansion of the self concept task the school has initiated by implementing various activities that broaden the child's perception of himself. Activities such as special one-one field trips, assigning new responsibilities to the child, and assigning the child a special place in the home where he can actualize his talents are ideas for including in your self concept kit.

Likewise parents and teachers could cooperatively develop homelearning kits to enhance and extend 'community identity activities' initiated in the classroom by the teacher. Kit two could focus on providing continuous expansion of the child's awareness of the community.

KIT TWO: Community Identity Builderas. The community identity kit could include activities to enhance what was started in the classroom. For example, in the study of community services the kit could suggest activities such as; (1) the father taking the child to his place of work and explaining how his service enables the community to become functional, (2) mother could show the child how her work (and this will be divergent) relates to maintaining the family and the society, and (3) brothers and sisters could show how their tasks relate to consolidating the family and building community.

In addition the community identity kit could include activities that expand the childs' awareness of the roles and functions of community living. In this sense the kit could contain suggestions for activities that parents might enact such as taking the child to see other communities (possibly to a restored frontier community), or to develop a communities booklet which they might put together with the child (as a family learning project) --comparing other communities to the community in which they live. Indeed parents and teachers might put together such a booklet and update it over a period of time.

A continuous need exists for cooperative living patterns among all people. Competitive living--when it reaches unhealthy levels--causes social decay and de-personalization of life. Both parents and teachers are more aware of this need for helping children to internalize cooperative living skills than ever before in history. The following are some ideas for parents and teachers to develop a home learning environment that reinforces and extends cooperative living skills.

KIT THREE: Cooperative Living Builders. Kit three should contain two kinds of learning orientations; simulated home learning games which involve family members in 'winning via cooperation' and real life activities which involve the family in sharing in roles and responsibilities to accomplish various living tasks.

Simulated games could be developed (at PTA meetings) that range from comparing the outcomes of competitive family living with cooperative family living--to a game process that challenges players to find shared solutions to world problems that have evolved from competitive living styles. Such a kit would contain motivating learning procedures as well as family activities that might well replace or modify the traditional homework process. Indeed homelearning can be an enjoyable and meaningful experience.

Real life task analysis might be another aspect of such a kit. Having each member of the family keep anecdotal records of the tasks they perform and categorize these tasks in relation to family contributions can be an interesting and valuable practice. Even if a child (infant) is unable to record tasks another family member might record his contributions thus including all members of the family in the activity.

An umbrella of concerns that overlay the society relate to the development of survival skills in children. The survival of man is always founded upon the very basic units of the society. Institutions have a deep responsibility to help the young find meaningful and humane ways of advancing their cause without becoming extinct. Indeed the school can initiate learning activities on safety, environment, human relations, proper use of technology, and a myriad of other concerns. This effort must be extended into the homelearning milieu if it is to have the fullest impact.

KIT FOUR: Survival Skill Builders. A homelearning kit on survival could include a variety of materials such as basic home safety activities, broader community survival concerns, and extended world survival concerns. These ideas could take the form of activities such as fire drills in the home and an explanation of the purpose of such drills, human relation meetings in the home, and the development of projects which lead to action on environmental cleanup in the home and neighborhood.

FORMATS FOR HOMELEARNING KITS. Thus far ideas have been presented on the development of homelearning kits. These kits can be developed in various learning areas and one might consider some of the following formats for organizational use.

1. Activity Cards. Some kits may take the form of activity cards which contain directions on how to initiate and develop the activity and instructions on how to assess the activity. Or they simply may be reading cards for home use (especially helpful in areas where many homes lack the resources to obtain reading materials. An advantage to the activity card is that it can be easily reproduced and distributed without much trouble.

2. Shoe Box Kits. Other kits may take the form of shoe box sets; the shoe boxes containing the materials for simulated games for homelearning activities. Such a kit could contain directions for use and the needed materials. For example, a puppetry kit for self concept games is one possible shoe boxt kit.Actually obtaining shoe boxes is a small matter if an active parent teacher group contacts local buisnesses and the making of needed materials can be accomplished at monthly meetings. Over a period of years a good supply of such homelearning kits can be developed.

3. Project Booklets. Some activities like the development of a family tree or community study can be organized into booklets. Indeed parent-teacher groups could obtain such booklets and provide a broad framework for the activity. Then the family could take it from that point for development. Such an idea can enhance what is happening in school.

4. Other Forms. There are many other forms that such kits could take such as slide presentations, cassette recordings of events in the home, and the use of programmed materials for various skill learnings. The variety of forms is endless.

RELATING IT TO THE CLASSROOM: A NOTE OF CAUTION. To develop an effective homelearning program it is important to relate the development of such kits to what is happening in the classroom. This necessitates parents and teachers working together with children for clarification of learning goals and appropriate activities to be implemented. Unrelated kits would be of minimal value to the child, the parent, and the teacher.

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